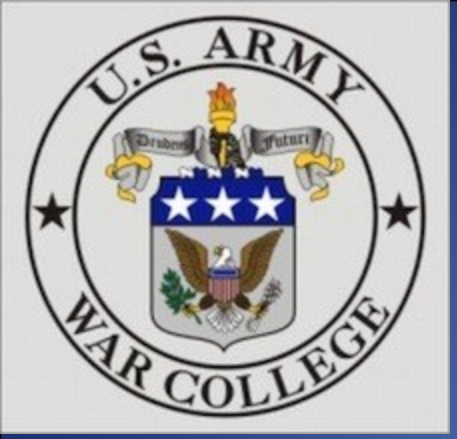

USAWC Effective Writing Seminar

Lesson Three: Content (2)

Dr. Tom Stewart

June 2013

"I hate writing, I love having written.“
--Dorothy Parker

Effective Writing Seminar Overview

- Lesson 1—Organization
- Lesson 2—Analyze the Question
- Lesson 3—Content

Steps of the Writing Process

1. Brainstorming
2. Freewrite
3. Outlining
4. Drafting
5. Revising
6. Editing/Proofreading
7. Publishing

Purposes of Writing

- Research
- Analysis
- Expository
- Persuasive

Six Traits of Effective Writing

1. Ideas
2. Organization
3. Voice
4. Word Choice
5. Sentence Fluency
6. Conventions

--From Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's iWrite

Knowing Your Audience

- USAWC Communicative Arts Directive
- Graduate-level
- Senior Officers and Government Officials
- Professionals in field
- Senior Strategic Officers

Know Your Assignment

- Guidelines
- USAWC Communicative Arts Directive
- Follow the guidelines completely

Organizing Your Paper

- Before you start
  - What are the requirements?
    - Length
    - Number and type of sources
  - What is that you are being asked to do?
  - Is it explicit? Is it more general?

Understanding Content

- Content

Understanding Content

- Content
- Critical Thinking

Understanding Content

- Content
- Critical Thinking
- Opinion

Understanding Content

- Content
- Critical Thinking
- Opinion
- Analysis

Improving the content of your writing

- Identify the goal of your writing
- Decide on a hook
- Think like your reader
- Get rid of distractions
- Only include what is relevant

– Adapted from Lisa Barone

Improving the content of your writing

- Let yourself write
- Use clear sentences
- Use effective titles
- Develop a voice
- Read your content aloud

– Adapted from Lisa Barone

Content—Giving Credit

Content—Giving Credit

Research-based writing in American institutions, both educational and corporate, is filled with rules that writers, particularly beginners, aren't aware of or don't know how to follow. Many of these rules have to do with research and proper citation. Gaining a familiarity of these rules, however, is critically important, as inadvertent mistakes can lead to charges of **plagiarism**, which is the uncredited use (both intentional and unintentional) of somebody else's words or ideas.

- Purdue OWL

Content—Giving Credit

Develop a topic based on what has already been said and written	**BUT**	Write something new and original
Rely on experts' and authorities' opinions	**BUT**	Improve upon and/or disagree with those same opinions
Give credit to previous researchers	**BUT**	Make your own significant contribution
Improve your English to fit into a discourse community by building upon what you hear and read	**BUT**	Use your own words and your own voice

-Purdue OWL

Content—Giving Credit—When do you need to give credit?

- Words or ideas presented in a magazine, book, newspaper, song, TV program, movie, Web page, computer program, letter, advertisement, or any other medium
- Information you gain through interviewing or conversing with another person, face to face, over the phone, or in writing
- When you copy the exact words or a unique phrase
- When you reprint any diagrams, illustrations, charts, pictures, or other visual materials
- When you reuse or repost any electronically-available media, including images, audio, video, or other media

-Purdue OWL

Content—Giving Credit—What doesn't need documentation?

- Writing your own lived experiences, your own observations and insights, your own thoughts, and your own conclusions about a subject
- When you are writing up your own results obtained through lab or field experiments
- When you use your own artwork, digital photographs, video, audio, etc.
- When you are using "common knowledge," things like folklore, common sense observations, myths, urban legends, and historical events (but **not** historical documents)
- When you are using generally-accepted facts, e.g., pollution is bad for the environment, including facts that are accepted within particular discourse communities, e.g., in the field of composition studies, "writing is a process" is a generally-accepted fact.

-Purdue OWL

Content—Giving Credit—What is “common knowledge”?

Generally speaking, you can regard something as common knowledge if you find the same information undocumented in at least five credible sources. Additionally, it might be common knowledge if you think the information you're presenting is something your readers will already know, or something that a person could easily find in general reference sources. But when in doubt, cite; if the citation turns out to be unnecessary, your teacher or editor will tell you. -Purdue OWL

Content—Giving Credit—Safe Practices

Reading and Note-Taking

- In your notes, always mark someone else's words with a big **Q**, for quote, or use big quotation marks
- Indicate in your notes which ideas are taken from sources with a big **S**, and which are your own insights (**ME**)
- When information comes from sources, record relevant documentation in your notes (book and article titles; URLs on the Web)

– Purdue OWL

Content—Giving Credit—Safe Practices

Interviewing and Conversing

- Take lots of thorough notes; if you have any of your own thoughts as you're interviewing, mark them clearly
- If your subject will allow you to record the conversation or interview (and you have proper clearance to do so through an Institutional Review Board, or IRB), place your recording device in an optimal location between you and the speaker so you can hear clearly when you review the recordings. Test your equipment, and bring plenty of backup batteries and media.
- If you're interviewing via email, retain copies of the interview subject's emails as well as the ones you send in reply
- Make any additional, clarifying notes immediately after the interview has concluded

– Purdue OWL

Content—Giving Credit—Safe Practices

Reading and Note-Taking

- In your notes, always mark someone else's words with a big **Q**, for quote, or use big quotation marks
- Indicate in your notes which ideas are taken from sources with a big **S**, and which are your own insights (**ME**)
- When information comes from sources, record relevant documentation in your notes (book and article titles; URLs on the Web)

– Purdue OWL

Content—Giving Credit—Safe Practices

Writing Paraphrases or Summaries

- Use a statement that credits the source somewhere in the paraphrase or summary, e.g., According to Jonathan Kozol, ...
- If you're having trouble summarizing, try writing your paraphrase or summary of a text without looking at the original, relying only on your memory and notes
- Check your paraphrase or summary against the original text; correct any errors in content accuracy, and be sure to use quotation marks to set off any exact phrases from the original text
- Check your paraphrase or summary against sentence and paragraph structure, as copying those is also considered plagiarism.
- Put quotation marks around any unique words or phrases that you cannot or do not want to change, e.g., "savage inequalities" exist throughout our educational system (Kozol).

– Purdue OWL

Content—Giving Credit—Safe Practices

Writing Direct Quotations

- Keep the source author's name in the same sentence as the quote
- Mark the quote with quotation marks, or set it off from your text in its own block, per the style guide your paper follows
- Quote no more material than is necessary; if a short phrase from a source will suffice, don't quote an entire paragraph
- To shorten quotes by removing extra information, use ellipsis points (...) to indicate omitted text, keeping in mind that:
  - Three ellipsis points indicates an in-sentence ellipsis, and four points for an ellipsis between two sentences
- To give context to a quote or otherwise add wording to it, place added words in brackets, []; be careful not to editorialize or make any additions that skew the original meaning of the quote—do that in your main text, e.g.,
  - **OK**: Kozol claims there are "savage inequalities" in our educational system, which is obvious.
  - **WRONG**: Kozol claims there are "[obvious] savage inequalities" in our educational system.
- Use quotes that will have the most rhetorical, argumentative impact in your paper; too many direct quotes from sources may weaken your credibility, as though you have nothing to say yourself, and will certainly interfere with your style
  - Purdue OWL

Content—Giving Credit—Safe Practices

Writing About Another's Ideas

- Note the name of the idea's originator in the sentence or throughout a paragraph about the idea
- Use parenthetical citations, footnotes, or endnotes to refer readers to additional sources about the idea, as necessary
- Be sure to use quotation marks around key phrases or words that the idea's originator used to describe the idea

– Purdue OWL

Revising and Editing

The history of Western psychological thought has long been dominated by philosophical considerations as to the nature of man. These notions have dictated corresponding considerations of the nature of the child within society, the practices by which children were to be raised, and the purposes of studying the child.

Revising and Editing

A single question has dominated Western psychological thought: what is the nature of man? This basic question leads to three others. What are children like? How should they be raised? Why should we study them?

Revising and Editing

- Paragraph Types
  - The Direct Paragraph
  - The Climactic Paragraph
  - The Turnabout Paragraph
  - The Interrogative Paragraph

From *The Writer's Options* (Morenberg/ Sommers)

Revising and Editing

- Your Role in Revising
- Your Role as an Editor

Revising and Editing

- Elements of the revising process
  - Coherence
  - Rearrangement and Repetition for Emphasis
  - Tone
  - Paragraph Patterns
  - Rewriting: Using Details

From *The Writer's Options* (Morenberg/ Sommers)

YOUR WORK